

VZCZCXRO5525  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHAK #2698/01 3051531  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 011531Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4242  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 002698

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#) [GG](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: DAS BRYZA REVIEWS SOUTH CAUCASUS ISSUES  
WITH GOT

REF: ANKARA 2596

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, reasons 1.4 b, d

¶1. (SBU) EUR DAS Bryza and the DCM met with Turkish MFA Deputy U/S for South Caucasus and Central Asian Affairs Unal Cevikoz on October 24 in Ankara, on the margins of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Foreign Ministers meeting. Cevikoz and Bryza exchanged views on developments in Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, Georgia's NATO accession, and opportunities to improve Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations.

GEORGIA: GO SLOW ON MAP  
-----

¶2. (C) Cevikoz stressed that Turkey supports Georgia's transatlantic integration. The GOT does not want Russia to have a veto over NATO enlargement, and will support the consensus on Georgia's Membership Action Plan (MAP). However, the GOT is concerned that, if Georgia attains MAP before making progress in resolving its territorial conflicts, particularly in Abkhazia, confrontation with Russia will follow. Cevikoz recounted how Georgian FM Bezhuashvili had told him that Georgia hoped to use NATO membership as a means to leverage settlements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia on Tbilisi's terms. But NATO accession was not the means to solve these conflicts, and the GOT is frustrated that Tbilisi has, in the meantime, been unwilling even to explore developing a dialogue with Sukhumi.

¶3. (C) Cevikoz noted that Abkhaz diaspora groups in Turkey were scheduled to host Abkhaz "President" Bagapsh last week. The GOG, however, at the last minute, asked Cevikoz to intervene and ensure the meeting was canceled (reftel). Cevikoz emphasized that the visit was unofficial, but told Bryza that Turkey is prepared to be a facilitator. It had offered to convey messages from Tbilisi to Bagapsh. Before it got cold feet, the GOG had asked Cevikoz to request the Abkhaz to resume talks. Cevikoz noted that the Abkhaz diaspora is gaining political clout in Ankara and that he is under considerable pressure to help ease Abkhazia's isolation.

¶4. (C) Bryza told Cevikoz that the USG had reached different conclusions about Georgia. Tension over Abkhazia had moderated somewhat, as evidenced by passage of the UNOMIG renewal resolution. He noted that the seven Abkhaz prisoners held by Georgia since their September 20 altercation with Georgian troops were expected to be released on Saturday. In principle, the U.S. believed Georgia would further moderate its behavior as it felt more certain that its path toward NATO would remain clear and as it fulfilled NATO membership criteria. The U.S. strongly supported MAP for Georgia, but wishes to get through deliberations on Kosovo before

launching a major push. Bryza submitted that perhaps Cevikoz had misinterpreted Bezhuashvili's comments on the relationship between MAP and resolution of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts; in his conversations with DAS Bryza, Bezhuashvili had always maintained that MAP and NATO membership would help deter Russian adventurism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by demonstrating that a lack of political settlements would not obstruct Georgia's path to NATO.

(Comment: Bezhuashvili affirmed his interpretation to Bryza during a conversation later that day. End Comment.) Georgia, Bryza said, is outmaneuvering Russia and separatists in South Ossetia by making reintegration with Georgia appear increasingly attractive. This will be even more the case as Georgia moves toward NATO membership. This would be acceptable, Cevikoz responded, but there is no process in Abkhazia that parallels the dynamic in South Ossetia. Georgia, right now, is repelling the Abkhaz, not making itself attractive. Bryza said we would encourage the Georgians to take advantage of channels with the Abkhaz diaspora, and had been encouraging President Saakashvili to permit direct maritime transit between Trabzon and Sukhumi. Cevikoz emphasized that Turkey has businesses ready to make investments in Abkhazia and open channels of commerce and transportation.

AZERBAIJAN: PESSIMISTIC ON N-K

15. (C) Cevikoz told Bryza that Azerbaijan is also concerned that Russia could become more confrontational in the Caucasus. He noted that personnel and equipment that Russia withdraws from Georgia is transferred to Armenia. This is of concern to Baku, and even to Ankara. The GOT believes that Baku is taking a fresh look at "regional balances," and may

ANKARA 00002698 002 OF 003

be opening the door slightly to NATO. He noted encouraging statements from Azerbaijan's NATO parliamentary delegation. Cevikoz said that Azerbaijani Deputy FM Azimov had reported he saw no prospect for agreement on the Minsk Group Co-Chairs basic principles for a settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K) this year or next. Bryza noted that Azimov is overly pessimistic on N-K, and was conveying only part of the real story to Cevikoz. Bryza expected to get a better sense of where the GOAJ is when he met with President Aliyev on October 26. While President Aliyev had lost confidence in Armenian President Kocharian, Armenian FM Oskanian and Kocharian indicated a desire to move forward the previous day. Armenian PM Sargsyan told DAS Bryza earlier in the week that he did not wish to start N-K negotiations from scratch should he be elected President in February; the only logical framework for a settlement is what was on the table now, and that there was no military solution to the N-K problem (as even a victorious military assault by Azerbaijan would generate 150,000 new refugees, and thereby continue the conflict indefinitely). Cevikoz wondered why Aliyev makes bellicose statements when he knows he will win election anyway. Bryza said Aliyev had agreed to his request to cut back such rhetoric; even Kocharian recognized this to be the case.

ARMENIA: WINDS BLOWING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

16. (C) Bryza asked Cevikoz if it was possible for Turkey to take advantage of a possibly extended pause in the Armenian "genocide" resolution (AGR) effort in the Congress to pursue improved relations with Armenia. Cevikoz said that he had done his very best to convince his political leadership to resume the Vienna negotiations and prepare for an opening to Armenia. That was in August. Now, the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) vote had ruined everything. The GOT viewed Oskanian's letter to Speaker Pelosi as serious evidence of Yerevan's incitement, even as Cevikoz himself said he recognized the political nuances of that letter. Referring to Deputy FM Kirakossian, Armenia's BSEC delegate, Cevikoz

recounted that Oskanian had dismissed any possibility of talks between Kirakossian and Cevikoz, arguing that if Ministers cannot agree, neither can deputies. These factors underscored for the GOT that genocide recognition is the GOAM's highest priority. Cevikoz said that to convince his political leadership to pursue an opening with Armenia, it will be necessary to convince them that AGR is, once and for all, off the table.

¶7. (C) The DCM explained that a definitive removal simply would not happen in our Congressional system, but we will seek to obtain clarity on when the measure might re-surface. The key now is that the GOT has some room to operate and Turkey must seize the opportunity to make progress toward normalization with Armenia. In doing so, the GOT can prevent the resolution from rising again in the future. Cevikoz responded that the U.S. will have to deliver this message to PM Erdogan and FM Babacan directly. Bryza offered his assessment that neither FM Oskanian nor other top GOAM officials were lobbying for AGR's passage. Their main concerns, like those of Armenian voters, were normalized relations and open borders with Turkey. Armenia would remain wary of Turkey's call to convene an historical commission, fearing it is a mere tactical ploy to prevent passage of AGR.

But FM Oskanian and PM Sargsyan had assured Bryza that if Turkey moved toward normalizing diplomatic relations and establishing rail and/or electricity links with Armenia, Yerevan would reciprocate by agreeing to participate in the historical commission. Under these conditions, there would be a genuine Turkey-Armenia reconciliation process that would be damaged if AGR proceeded. This was the only way to reduce the danger of AGR's return year after year. Cevikoz replied that, right now, the winds were blowing the other way, with the GOT considering restrictions on the number of flights between Yerevan and Istanbul. Cevikoz urged the U.S. to deliver the above messages to PM Erdogan and FM Babacan directly, especially that the GOAM was not pressing for passage of AGR in the U.S. Congress.

¶8. (C) During the Ministerial, DAS Bryza conveyed to President Gul and to FM Babacan the USG assessment that the GOAM is not pressing for passage of AGR. Both Gul and Babacan were dubious, citing Oskanian's letter. Bryza countered that Oskanian was only protesting the U.S. Secretaries of State letter, which referred to a

SIPDIS  
reconciliation process, and arguing that no such process existed. Asked about whether Turkey could make a move on electricity and/or rail links, Babacan smiled and said,

ANKARA 00002698 003 OF 003

"We'll talk about it." Bryza also suggested to Kirakossian that he reinforce these points when he greeted Gul and Babacan. Later at lunch, MFA U/S Apakan appeared to take the point that AGR could not be permanently blocked absent normalized relations and opened borders between Turkey and Armenia, and that the GOT should take advantage of an extended pause in the AGR process. Apakan rejected Oskanian's claim that no reconciliation process existed, citing Turkey's expressed readiness to meet. Looking ahead, Apakan suggested we work with Cevikoz on electricity connections and/or the railroad when we have an extended pause in AGR.

¶9. (U) DAS Bryza cleared this cable.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON